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HEINRICH HEINE

THE RABBI OF BACHERACH

A FRAGMENT

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With a Selection from Heine's Letters  
and an Epilogue by Erich Loewenthal

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## CONTENTS

The Rabbi of Bacherach	3
Heine's Letters	67
Facsimile of Two Pages of Letter to Moses Moser, October 25, 1824	72
Epilogue	81



THE RABBI OF BACHERACH

*A Fragment*



## FIRST CHAPTER

Above the Rhineland, where the great river's banks cease to smile, where mountain and cliff, with their romantic ruined castles, show a bolder bearing, and a wilder, sterner majesty arises—there, like a fearful tale of olden times, lies the gloomy, ancient town of Bacherach. But these walls with the toothless battlements and blind lookouts, in whose gaps the wind blows and the sparrows nest, were not always so broken-down and crumbling. In the ugly unpaved alleys seen through the ruined gate there did not always reign that dreary silence broken only now and then by screaming children, bickering women, and lowing cows. These walls were proud and strong once, and through these alleys moved a fresh, free life, power and pomp, joy and sorrow, plenty of love, and plenty of hate.

Bacherach was once one of those municipalities which the Romans founded when they ruled along the Rhine. And, although subsequent times were stormy and the inhabitants later came under the overlordship of the Hohenstaufen and finally that of the Wittelsbachs, nevertheless they knew, after the example of other towns on the Rhine, how to maintain a fairly free commonwealth. It consisted



of a combination of several corporate bodies, with those of the old patriciate and those of the guilds—which again were subdivided according to their different trades—both striving for sole power. So that while outwardly they all stood firmly together, bound to common vigilance and defense against the neighboring robber barons, internally their divergent interests kept them in constant dissension. There was therefore little neighborliness and much mistrust; even overt outbursts of passion were not infrequent. The Lord Warden sat on the high tower of Sareck; and, like his falcon, he swooped down whenever called for—and sometimes uncalled for. The clergy ruled in darkness by darkening the souls. One of the most isolated and helpless of bodies, gradually crushed by the civil law, was the small Jewish community which had first settled in Bacharach in Roman days, and later, during the Great Persecution, had taken in whole flocks of fugitive brothers in the faith.

The Great Persecution of the Jews began with the Crusades and raged most grimly about the middle of the fourteenth century, at the end of the Great Plague which, like any other public disaster, was blamed on the Jews. It was asserted that they had brought down the wrath of God, and that they had poisoned the wells with the aid of the lepers. The

enraged rabble, especially the hordes of the Flagellants—half-naked men and women who, lashing themselves for penance and chanting a mad song to the Virgin Mary, swept through the Rhineland and South Germany—murdered many thousands of Jews, tortured them, or baptized them by force. Another accusation, which even before that time, and throughout the Middle Ages until the beginning of the past century, cost them much blood and anguish, was the absurd tale, repeated *ad nauseam* in chronicle and legend, that the Jews would steal the consecrated wafer, stabbing it with knives until the blood ran from it, and that they would slay Christian children at their feast of the Passover, in order to use the blood for their nocturnal rite.

The Jews—sufficiently hated for their faith, their wealth, and their ledgers—were on this holiday entirely in the hands of their enemies, who could encompass their destruction with ease by spreading rumors of such an infanticide, perhaps even sneaking the bloody corpse of a child into a Jewish outcast's house, and then setting upon the Jews at their prayers. There would be murder, plunder, and baptism; and great miracles would be wrought by the dead child, whom the Church might even canonize in the end. Saint Werner is one of these saints; and it was in his honor that at Oberwesel the great abbey was

founded which is now one of the most beautiful ruins on the Rhine, and delights us so much with the Gothic splendor of its long, ogival windows, proudly soaring pillars, and stone-carvings, when we pass it on a gay, green summer day and do not know its origin. In honor of this saint, three more great churches were built along the Rhine and innumerable Jews abused or murdered. This happened in the year 1287; and in Bacherach, where one of Saint Werner's churches arose, the Jews also underwent many trials and tribulations. For two centuries afterwards they were spared such attacks of mob fury, although they were still harassed and threatened enough.

However, the more they were beset with hate from without, the more fond and tender grew the Bacherach Jews' domestic life, and the more profound their piety and fear of God. A model of godly conduct was the local rabbi, called Rabbi Abraham; a young man still, but famed far and wide for his learning. He was born in the town, and his father, who had been the rabbi there before him, had charged him in his last will to devote himself to the same calling and never leave Bacherach unless in deadly peril. This word, and a cabinet full of rare books, was all that was left him by his father, who had lived in poverty and learning. Nevertheless,

Rabbi Abraham was a very wealthy man now, being married to the only daughter of his late paternal uncle who had been a dealer in jewelry, and whose riches he had inherited. A few sly gossips kept hinting at that—as if the Rabbi had married his wife just for the money. But the women, contradicting in unison, had old stories to tell: how the Rabbi had been in love with Sarah—she was commonly called Lovely Sarah—long before he went to Spain, and how she had to wait seven years till he returned after he wed her against her father's will, and even without her consent, by means of the "betrothal ring." For every Jew can make a Jewish girl his lawful wife if he succeeds in putting a ring on her finger and saying at the same time: "I take thee for my wife, according to the law of Moses and Israel!"

At the mention of Spain the sly ones used to smile in a knowing way; probably because of a dark rumor that while Rabbi Abraham had studied the holy law zealously enough at the Academy of Toledo, he had also copied Christian customs and absorbed ways of free thinking, like the Spanish Jews who at that time had attained to an extraordinary height of culture. In their hearts, though, those gossips hardly believed their own insinuations. For the Rabbi's life, after his return from Spain, had been extremely pure, pious, and earnest; he observed the most triv-

ial rites with painful conscientiousness, fasted each Monday and Thursday, abstained from meat and wine except on the Sabbath and other holidays, and spent his days in study and in prayer. By day, he expounded the Law to the students whom his fame had drawn to Bacherach; and by night he gazed on the stars in the sky, or into the eyes of Lovely Sarah. The Rabbi's marriage was childless, yet there was about him no lack of life or gaiety. The great hall in his house, which adjoined the synagogue, was open to the whole community. Here one came and went without ceremony, offered quick prayers, traded news, or took common counsel in hard times. Here the children played on Sabbath mornings while in the synagogue the weekly chapter was read; here one met for wedding and funeral processions, quarreled, and was reconciled; here those that were cold found a warm stove, and the hungry a well-spread table. Besides, there was a multitude of relatives surrounding the Rabbi; brothers and sisters with their wives and husbands and children, as well as both his and his wife's uncles and aunts and countless other kin—all of whom regarded him as the head of the family—made themselves at home in his house from dawn to dusk, and never failed to dine there in full force on the high holidays. In particular, such grand family dinners took place in the

Rabbi's house at the annual celebration of the Passover, an age-old, wondrous festival which Jews all over the world still observe on the eve of the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan, in eternal memory of their redemption from Egyptian slavery, and in the following manner:

As soon as night falls, the mistress of the house lights the lamps, spreads the tablecloth, puts three pieces of the flat unleavened bread in its midst, covers them with a napkin, and on the pile places six little dishes containing symbolical food: an egg, lettuce, horse-radish, the bone of a lamb, and a brown mixture of raisins, cinnamon, and nuts. At this table, the head of the house then sits down with all relations and friends, and reads to them from a very curious book called the Haggadah, the contents of which are a strange mixture of ancestral legends, miraculous tales of Egypt, odd narratives, disputations, prayers, and festive songs. A huge supper is brought in halfway through this celebration; and even during the reading, at certain times, one tastes of the symbolical dishes, eats pieces of unleavened bread, and drinks four cups of red wine. This nocturnal festival is melancholically gay in character, gravely playful, and mysterious as a fairy tale. And the traditional singsong in which the Haggadah is read by the head of the house, and now and then

repeated by the listeners in chorus, sounds at the same time so awesomely intense, maternally gentle, and suddenly awakening, that even those Jews who have long forsaken the faith of their fathers and pursued foreign joys and honors are moved to the depths of their hearts when the old, familiar sounds of the Passover happen to strike their ears.

And so Rabbi Abraham once sat in the great hall of his house with his relations, disciples, and other guests, to celebrate the eve of the Passover. Everything in the hall was brighter than usual; over the table hung a gaily embroidered silk spread whose gold fringes touched the floor; the plates with the symbolic foods shone appealingly, as did the tall, wine-filled goblets adorned with the embossed images of many holy stories. The men sat in their black cloaks and black, flat hats and white ruffs; the women, in strangely glittering garments made of cloths from Lombardy, wore their diadems and necklaces of gold and pearls; and the silver Sabbath lamp cast its most festive light on the devoutly merry faces of old and young. Reclining, as custom enjoins, on the purple velvet cushions of a chair raised above the others, Rabbi Abraham sat reading and chanting the Haggadah, while the mixed choir fell in or responded in the prescribed places. The Rabbi wore his black holiday garb. His noble,

somewhat austere features seemed milder than usual; his lips were smiling out of the dark beard as if they had something fair to tell; and in his eyes was a light as of happy memories and visions of the future.

Lovely Sarah, seated beside him on a similar high velvet chair, wore none of her jewelry, being the hostess; only white linen enclosed her slender form and pious face. It was a touchingly beautiful face, just as always the beauty of Jewesses is of a peculiarly moving kind—a consciousness of the deep misery, the bitter scorn, and the evil chances wherein their kindred and friends live, brings to their lovely features a certain aching tenderness and observant loving apprehension that strangely charm our hearts. So, on this evening, Lovely Sarah sat looking constantly into her husband's eyes. But every now and then she also glanced at the quaint parchment book of the Haggadah which lay before her, bound in gold and velvet: an old heirloom with wine stains of many years on it, which had come down from her grandfather's time and in which were many bold and brightly-colored pictures that even as a little girl she had so loved to look at on Passover evenings. They represented all kinds of biblical stories, such as Abraham smashing his father's idols with a hammer; the angels coming to



him; Moses killing the Mizri; and Pharaoh sitting in state on his throne, with the frogs giving him no rest even at table. Also she saw how Pharaoh drowned, thank God! and how the children of Israel went cautiously through the Red Sea; how they stood openmouthed before Mount Sinai, with their sheep, cows, and oxen; how pious King David played the harp; and finally, how Jerusalem, with the towers and battlements of its Temple, shone in the glory of the sun!

The second cup of wine was poured, the faces and the voices of the guests grew brighter, and the Rabbi, taking a piece of the unleavened bread and raising it in a gay greeting, read these words from the Haggadah: "Behold, this is the bread our fathers ate in Egypt. Whoever is hungry, let him come and share it! Whoever is in want, let him come and celebrate the Passover! This year we are here; the coming year, in the land of Israel! This year we are slaves; the coming year, free men!"

At this moment, the door of the hall opened and two tall, pale men entered, wrapped in very wide cloaks, and one of them said: "Peace be with you; we are men of your faith, on a journey, and wish to celebrate the Passover with you." And the Rabbi, quickly and kindly, replied, "Peace be with you. Sit down here by me." The two strangers promptly sat

down at the table, and the Rabbi read on. Sometimes, while the others were saying the responses, he would throw an endearing word to his wife: alluding to the old joke that on this evening the head of a Jewish house considers himself a king, he said to her, "Be happy, my Queen!" But she, smiling sadly, replied, "We have no Prince"—by which she meant the son of the house, whom a passage in the Haggadah requires to question his father in certain prescribed words about the meaning of the festival. The Rabbi said nothing, only pointing with his finger to a picture just turned up in the Haggadah, on which was shown very charmingly how the three angels came to Abraham, to announce to him that he would have a son by his wife Sarah, who with feminine cunning was listening to their talk from behind the tent door. This little hint sent a threefold blush to the beautiful woman's cheeks; she cast her eyes down, and then lovingly raised them again to her husband, who went on chanting the wondrous story of Rabbi Joshua, Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Azariah, Rabbi Akiba, and Rabbi Tarfon, who sat reclining in B'ne B'rak and talked all night long of the Children of Israel's exodus from Egypt, until their disciples came to tell them that it was daylight and the great morning prayer was being recited in the synagogue.

Now, as Lovely Sarah was thus devoutly listening and continually looking at her husband, she noticed that his face suddenly froze in horrible distortion, the blood left his cheeks and lips, and his eyes stood out like balls of ice. But almost at the same instant she saw his features returning to their former calm and cheerfulness, his cheeks and lips growing red again, his eyes circling merrily—in fact, his whole being seemed seized by a mad gaiety that otherwise was quite foreign to his nature. Lovely Sarah was frightened as never before in her life. A chilling dread rose in her, due less to the signs of rigid terror which for a moment she had seen in her husband's countenance than to his present merriment, which gradually turned into rollicking exultation. The Rabbi moved his cap from one ear to the other, pulled and twisted his beard comically, sang the text of the Haggadah as if it were a catch; and in the enumeration of the Egyptian plagues, when it is the custom to dip the forefinger in the full cup and shake the clinging drop of wine to the ground, the Rabbi sprinkled the younger girls with red wine and there was much wailing over spoiled collars, and ringing laughter. An ever more eerie feeling overcame Lovely Sarah at this convulsively bubbling gaiety of her husband's; seized by nameless qualms, she gazed on the humming swarm of

brightly illumined people, comfortably rocking to and fro, nibbling the thin Passover bread or sipping wine or gossiping or singing aloud, in the very happiest of moods.

The time for supper came and all rose to wash, and Lovely Sarah brought a great silver basin covered with embossed gold figures, which she held before each guest while water was poured over his hands. When she thus served the Rabbi, he winked at her significantly and quietly slipped out of the door. Lovely Sarah followed on his heels; hastily, the Rabbi grasped her hand and quickly drew her away through the dark alleys of Bacherach, quickly through the town gate, out onto the highway leading along the Rhine, toward Bingen.

It was one of those nights in spring which, though soft enough and starry, raise strange shivers in the soul. The fragrance of the flowers was deathly. The birds chirped as if glad to vex someone and yet vexed themselves. The moon cast malicious yellow stripes of light over the darkly murmuring river. The tall, bulky rocks of the cliffs looked like menacingly wagging giants' heads. The watchman on the tower of Castle Strahleck blew a melancholy tune, and with it, jealously chiming, tolled the little death bell of Saint Werner's. Lovely Sarah still held the silver ewer in her right hand; her left was held

by the Rabbi, and she felt that his fingers were icy and his arm was trembling. But she followed in silence, perhaps because she had long been accustomed to obey her husband blindly and without questioning—perhaps, too, because fear sealed her lips from within.

Below Castle Sonneck, opposite Lorch—about where the hamlet of Niederrheinbach stands now—a high cliff arches out over the bank of the Rhine. This Rabbi Abraham ascended with his wife, looked all about him, and stared up at the stars. Lovely Sarah, trembling and chilled by fears of death, stood with him and regarded the pale face on which pain, dread, piety, and rage seemed to flash back and forth in the ghostly light of the moon. But when the Rabbi suddenly tore the silver ewer from her hand and hurled it clanking down into the Rhine, she could no longer bear the awful anxiety—and crying out, "Merciful Shaddai!" she threw herself at his feet and implored him to reveal the dark secret.

The Rabbi moved his lips soundlessly a few times, unable to speak; but finally he called out, "Do you see the Angel of Death? Down there he hovers over Bacherach. Yet we have escaped his sword. Praised be the Lord!" And in a voice still shaking with fright he told how, reclining happily

and chanting the Haggadah, he had chanced to look under the table and there, at his feet, had seen the bloody corpse of a child. "Then I knew," added the Rabbi, "that our two late guests were not of the community of Israel, but of the assembly of the godless whose plan was to bring that corpse into our house by stealth, charge us with the murder, and incite the people to loot and murder us. I could not let on that I saw through the work of darkness; thereby I should have only speeded my destruction. Cunning alone could save our lives. Praised be the Lord! Have no fear, Lovely Sarah; our friends and relatives also will be saved. It was my blood after which the villains lusted; I have escaped them, and they will be content with my silver and gold. Come with me, Lovely Sarah, to another land; we will leave misfortune behind; lest it follow us, I threw the last of my possessions, the silver ewer, to it as a peace offering. The God of our fathers will not forsake us. Come, you are tired. Down there, Silent William stands by his boat; he will row us up the Rhine."

Without a sound and as if her every limb were broken, Lovely Sarah sank into the Rabbi's arms. Slowly, he carried her down to the river bank, to Silent William who, although a deaf-mute, was a handsome lad; he supported his old foster mother,

a neighbor of the Rabbi's, as a fisherman, and kept his boat at this point. It seemed, however, as if he sensed the Rabbi's intention or had, in fact, been waiting for him; for playing about his silent lips was the sweetest compassion, and his great blue eyes rested meaningly on Lovely Sarah as he carefully lifted her into the boat.

The glance of the dumb youth stirred Lovely Sarah from her daze. She suddenly realized that all her husband had told her was no mere dream; and streams of bitter tears poured down over her cheeks which now were as white as her garment. She sat in the center of the boat, a weeping marble image, while beside her sat her husband and Silent William, both rowing earnestly.

Now, whether this is due to the oars' monotonous beat, or to the boat's rocking, or to the fragrance of those mountainous banks where joy grows, it always happens that somehow even the saddest will feel strangely calmed, when on a night in spring he is lightly borne in a light boat, on the dear, clear river Rhine. Truly, old, kindhearted Father Rhine cannot bear to see his children weep. Hushing their tears he rocks them in his faithful arms, tells them his loveliest fairy tales and promises them his most golden treasures—perhaps even the hoard of the Nibelungs, sunk ages ago. Lovely Sarah's tears, too,

flowed ever more gently; her greatest woes were playfully carried away by the whispering waves. The night grew less darkly awesome, and the native hills greeted her as in the tenderest farewell. Greeting kindlier than all was the Kädrieh, her favorite mountain—and in the strange moonlight it seemed as if up there a damsel stood with anxiously outstretched arms, as if quick dwarfs were swarming out of their rock fissures, and a horseman racing up the mountainside at full gallop. Lovely Sarah felt like a little girl again, sitting once more in the lap of her aunt from Lorch and being told the pretty story of the bold knight who freed the poor damsel the dwarfs had kidnapped, and further true stories: of the queer Whispervale beyond, where the birds talk quite sensibly, and of Gingerbread Land, where the good, obedient children go, and of enchanted princesses, singing trees, crystal castles, golden bridges, laughing water sprites. . . . But in between all these pretty tales that were coming to life, ringing and gleaming, Lovely Sarah heard her father's voice angrily scolding poor Aunt for putting so much nonsense into the child's head! Soon it was as if she were being placed on the little stool before her father's velvet-covered chair, and he were smoothing her long hair with gentle fingers, smiling cheerfully, and rocking himself comfortably in his



roomy Sabbath dressing gown of blue silk. . . . It must be a Sabbath, for the flowered spread was on the table, all the silver in the room had been polished until it shone like mirror glass, and the white-bearded sexton sat beside her father, chewing raisins and talking in Hebrew. Little Abraham also came in, with a perfectly huge book, and modestly asked his uncle for permission to interpret a chapter from the Holy Scripture, so that the Uncle might convince himself that he had learned a great deal in the past week and thus deserved a great deal of praise and cakes. . . . Then the little fellow put the book on the broad arm of the chair and explained the story of Jacob and Rachel—how Jacob raised his voice and wept aloud when he first saw his little cousin Rachel, how he talked with her so fondly by the well, how he had to serve seven years for her, and how quickly they passed, and how he married Rachel and loved her forever and ever . . . . All at once, Lovely Sarah remembered too that her father then exclaimed in a merry voice, "Won't you marry your cousin Sarah like that?" To which little Abraham gravely replied, "I will, and she shall wait seven years." Dimly, these pictures moved through the woman's soul; she saw how she and her little cousin—now grown so big, and her husband—played childishly together in the taber-

nacle, where they delighted in the gay wallpapers, flowers, mirrors, and gilded apples; how little Abraham would pet her ever more tenderly until he gradually grew bigger and surlier, and finally quite big and quite surly. . . . And at last she is sitting at home in her room, alone, on a Saturday evening; the moon shines brightly through the window, and the door flies open and her cousin Abraham, in travel clothes and pale as death, storms in and grasps her hand and puts a golden ring on her finger and says solemnly: "I hereby take thee for my wife, according to the law of Moses and Israel!" "But now," he adds, trembling, "now I must go away to Spain. Farewell—seven years you shall wait for me!" And he rushes off, and Lovely Sarah, crying, tells all that to her father. . . . He roars and rages: "Cut off your hair, for you are a married woman!"—and wants to ride after Abraham to force him to write a letter of divorcement. But Abraham is over the hills and far away; the father comes home silently; and when Lovely Sarah helps him pull his boots off and soothingly remarks that Abraham would return after seven years, he curses, "Seven years you shall go begging!" and dies soon after.

So the old stories swept through Lovely Sarah's mind like a hurried shadow play, with the images strangely intermingling; and between them ap-

peared half-strange, half-familiar bearded faces, and great flowers with marvelously broad leaves. Then, too, the Rhine seemed to murmur the melodies of the Haggadah, and its pictures rose out of the water, large as life but distorted—crazy pictures: the forefather Abraham anxiously smashes the idols which always hurriedly put themselves together again; the Mizri defends himself fiercely against an enraged Moses; Mount Sinai flashes and flames; King Pharaoh swims in the Red Sea with his jagged golden crown clutched in his teeth; frogs with human faces swim after him, and the waves foam and roar, and a dark giant's hand emerges from them, threateningly. . . .

That, however, was the Bishop Hatto's Mouse Tower, and the boat was just shooting through the eddy of Bingen. It shook Lovely Sarah somewhat out of her reveries, and she looked at the hills along the shore, with the lights in the castles flickering atop them and moonlit night mists drawing past below. But suddenly she thought she saw there her friends and relatives rushing past in terror, with dead faces and white, flowing shrouds, along the Rhine. . . . Everything turned black before her eyes; a stream of ice poured into her soul, and as though sleeping she could just hear the Rabbi saying the night prayer over her, slowly and anxiously

as it is said over people sick unto death, and dreamily she stammered the words: "Ten thousand to the right—ten thousand to the left—to guard the King from the dread of the night. . . ."

But, suddenly, all the invading gloom and terror vanished. The dark curtain was torn away from Heaven, and in view above came the Holy City, Jerusalem, with its towers and gates; the Temple gleamed in golden splendor; in its forecourt Lovely Sarah saw her father in his yellow Sabbath dressing gown, smiling cheerfully; from the round windows of the Temple, all her friends and relatives merrily greeted her; in the Holy of Holies knelt pious King David with purple mantle and glittering crown, and his song and harp rang sweetly. And blissfully smiling, Lovely Sarah fell asleep.

## SECOND CHAPTER

When she opened her eyes, Lovely Sarah was all but blinded by the rays of the sun. The high towers of a great city rose before her, and Silent William stood erect in the boat, guiding it with his boat hook through the merry whirl of ships gaily decked with bunting, the crews of some looking idly down as they passed, while on others all hands were busy unloading boxes, bales, and barrels into lighters which took them ashore, all amidst a deafening noise from the constant halloos of the boatmen, the shouts of the merchants from the river bank, and the railing of the tollmen skipping from deck to deck in their red coats, with thin white maces and white faces.

"Yes, Lovely Sarah," the Rabbi told his wife, cheerfully smiling, "this is the world-famous Free Imperial and Commercial City of Frankfort on the Main, and it is this very river Main which we are sailing. Over there, those houses beckoning amidst green hills are Sachsenhausen, where Lame Gumpertz goes to get the fine myrrh for us at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. You also see here the strong Main bridge, with its thirteen arches that plenty of folk, carriages, and horses may safely

cross, and in the middle stands the little house of which Auntie Dovey told us, where a baptized Jew lives, and pays sixpence to any man who brings him a dead rat, on behalf of the Jewish community which is supposed to deliver five thousand rats' tails annually to the town council."

Upon hearing of this war which the Jews of Frankfort had to wage against the rats Lovely Sarah could not help laughing; the bright sunlight and the new, gay world rising before her had rid her soul of all the past night's dread and horror and, once lifted out of the boat by her husband and Silent William, a happy sense of safety seemed to pervade her. But Silent William with his beautiful, deep blue eyes looked long at her face, half mournfully, half gaily; then, after another meaningful glance at the Rabbi, he jumped back into his boat and soon was gone with it.

"Silent William does bear a great likeness to my late brother," remarked Lovely Sarah.

"The angels all look alike," the Rabbi lightly replied. He took his wife by the hand and led her through the crowds milling on the shore where now—it being the time of the Easter Fair—a mass of wooden trading booths had been put up. Entering the city by the dark Main Gate, they found the traffic no less noisy. Shops rose side by side in a narrow

street, and the houses were, as everywhere in Frankfort, specially equipped for trade: the ground floors all without windows, only with open arches allowing the passers-by to look far inside and plainly to observe the merchandise exhibited. How Lovely Sarah marveled at the wealth of precious goods, at a splendor never yet seen! There were Venetians offering for sale all of the luxury of Italy and the East, and Lovely Sarah seemed as though spell-bound at the sight of the piled-up finery and jewels, the colorful caps and bodices, the golden bracelets and necklaces, of all the frippery which women like to admire and in which they like even better to deck themselves out. The richly embroidered velvets and silks seemed to want to speak to Lovely Sarah and to flash all manner of odd things back into her memory, and it really seemed to her as if she were a little girl again and Auntie Dovey had kept her promise and taken her to the Frankfort Fair, and that now she were standing in front of the pretty clothes she had been told so much about. With secret joy she was already pondering what to bring back to Bacherach—which of her two young cousins, Blossom or Birdie, would most like the blue satin sash and whether the green little pants would fit little Gottschalk—when all of a sudden she said to herself, "Oh, God! they have all grown up in the mean-

time and were killed yesterday! One wildly started, as the horrible nocturnal images appeared again before her; but the gold-embroidered garments, blinking after her as with a thousand rogue's eyes, coaxed all the gloom out of her mind. And as she looked up at her husband's face it was unclouded, gravely mild as usual. "Close your eyes, Lovely Sarah," said the Rabbi and led his wife on through the milling throng.

What a merry bustle! Mostly there were traders bargaining loudly or talking to themselves as they calculated on their fingers, or having their purchases borne to the inn by several heavily laden porters who ran after them at a dog trot. Other faces indicated that curiosity alone had brought them. By his red cloak and golden chain one recognized the ample alderman. The black, prosperously billowing doublet revealed the proud and honorable burgher. The iron Pickelhaube, the yellow leather jerkin and the huge, rattling spurs heralded the heavy cavalryman. Hiding under the point of the black velvet coif was the brow of a rosy girl's face, and the lads leaping after like hunting dogs on the scent showed themselves to be perfect swells by their dashing, feathered berets, their tinkling peaked buskins and their parti-colored silk raiment, which might be green on the right side and red on the left, or rainbow-



striped on one and piebald-checked on the other, so that the foolish fellows looked as if they were split lengthwise. The human tide swept the Rabbi and his wife to the city's great marketplace, surrounded by tall gables and called "the Römer," after a huge house by that name which had been bought by the municipality and dedicated for use as the city hall. In this building took place the election of Germany's Emperor, and before it knightly tournaments were often held. King Maximilian, an ardent lover of such sports, was present in Frankfort at the time, and it was but a day since a great jousting in his honor had taken place before the Römer. Along the wooden barriers, now being torn down by carpenters, numerous idlers still stood and told each other how yesterday the Duke of Brunswick and the Margrave of Brandenburg had charged one another to the sound of trumpets and drums, how Sir Walter the Knave had so mightily unhorsed the Knight of the Bear that the splinters of his lance flew in the air, and how the lank, blond King Max, ringed by his courtiers, had stood on the balcony and rubbed his hands for joy. The golden carpets still hung on the balustrade and from the ogival windows of the city hall. The other houses on the marketplace also were still festively adorned and decked out in coats-of-arms, especially the Limburg

house on whose banner a maiden was painted bearing a hawk on her hand while a monkey held up her mirror. On the balcony of this house many knights and ladies stood in smiling conversation, looking down on the crowd that surged to and fro underneath, crazily grouped and attired. What a host of idlers of all ages and estates had flocked together for curiosity's sake! There was laughing, grousing, pilfering, pinching of buttocks and cheering, and in between rang the shrill trumpet blasts of the red-robed physician who stood on his high scaffolding with his clown and his monkey, quite literally trumpeting his skill, praising his tinctures and miracle ointments, or solemnly regarding the urine glass held up by some old woman, or preparing to pull a poor peasant's wisdom tooth. Two fencing masters, fluttering about in gay ribbons with brandished rapiers, met as if by accident and clashed, feigning anger; after long combat they declared each other invincible, and went to collect a few pennies. Now, with fife and drum, the newly founded archers' guild marched by. Then, preceded by the bailiff with a red flag, came a flock of roving damsels from the Würzburg bawdyhouse, "the Ass," on their way to the Rosental, where the honorable authorities had assigned them quarters for the Fair. "Close your eyes, Lovely Sarah," said the Rabbi.

For these fancifully and much too scantily clad wenches, some of them very pretty, were carrying on in the lewdest fashion, brazenly baring white breasts, chaffing the passers-by with shameless words and swinging their long walking sticks; and while riding them like hobbyhorses down to St. Catherine's Gate, they stridently intoned the witches' song:

Where is the goat for the Devil's bride?  
Is there no goat? Then to Old Nick  
We're going to ride, we're going to ride,  
We're going to ride on the stick!

This singsong, which was still audible at a distance, was lost in the end in the long-drawn-out cathedral sounds of an approaching procession. This was a sad train of shorn and barefooted monks bearing lighted wax candles, or banners with saints' images, or large silver crucifixes. Walking ahead of them were red- and white-robed boys with smoking censers. In the center of the procession, beneath a sumptuous canopy, one saw priests wearing white vestments of precious lace or colored silk stoles, and one of them held in his hand a sun-shaped gold vessel, which upon reaching a saint's shrine at one corner of the marketplace he raised up high, half shouting and half chanting Latin words. . . . At

the same time a little bell rang, and all the people roundabout fell silent, sank to their knees, and made the sign of the cross. The Rabbi, however, said to his wife, "Close your eyes, Lovely Sarah," and hastily drew her away into a narrow side street, through a maze of crooked alleys, and finally across the uninhabited, desolate field that separated the new Jewish quarter from the rest of the city.

Before that time the Jews had lived between the cathedral and the river bank—that is, from the bridge as far as the Lumpenbrunnen, and from the Mehlwaage as far as St. Bartholomew's. But the Catholic clergy obtained a papal bull forbidding the Jews to live so close to the main church, and the city assigned them a place on the Wollgraben, where they built the Jewish quarter of today. This was provided with high walls, and also with iron chains across the gates, to block any onrushing mob—for here, too, the Jews lived in fear and oppression, and, more than nowadays, in the memory of past distress. In the year 1240 the unleashed populace had wrought a great bloodbath among them, which was called the first Jew-hunt; and in the year 1349, when the Flagellants set the town afire in their passage through and charged the Jews with arson, most of the latter were killed by the incensed people or died in the flames of their own homes,

and this was called the second Jew-hunt. Later, the Jews were frequently threatened with similar hunts, and whenever there was internal unrest in Frankfurt, notably if the town council was quarreling with the guilds, the Christian rabble would be on the point of storming the Jewish quarter. The latter had two gates, which were closed from the outside on Catholic holidays, and from the inside on Jewish ones, and before each gate was a guardhouse manned by soldiers of the city.

When the Rabbi and his wife came to the gate of the Jewish quarter, they could see through the open windows of the guardhouse the lansquenets sprawling on their cots, and outside the door, in the sunshine, the drummer sat improvising on his big drum. He was a large, heavy figure of a man, the jerkin and trousers of flame-yellow cloth puffed out greatly in the arms and thighs and strewn from top to bottom with tiny red tufts so sewn as to seem as if innumerable human tongues were licking out of the cloth. His chest and back were armored with black cloth cushions from which the drum was suspended; on his head he wore a flat, round black cap; and his face was just as flat and round, of the same orange-yellow and spotted with little red pimples, and twisted in a yawning smile. Thus the fellow sat, drumming the melody of the song which the Flag-

ellants used to chant at the Jew-hunt, and in his rough, beery voice he gargled forth the words:

Our dear Lady true  
Walked in the morning dew,  
*Kyrie Eleison!*

"Jack, that's a bad tune," a voice cried from behind the locked gate of the Jewish quarter; "a bad song, too, Jack—doesn't suit the drum, doesn't suit it a bit and least of all during the Fair and on Easter morning; a bad song, a dangerous song—Jack, Jackie, little Drum-Jackie, I'm a single individual and if you love me, if you love Stern, the long Stern, long Nosey Stern, then stop it!"

These words were forced out of the unseen speaker partly in anxious haste, partly in slow sighs, in a tone shifting abruptly from soft drawl to hoarse grating, as it is found among consumptives. The drummer remained unmoved, and drumming on in the melody he continued to sing:

There came a little child,  
His beard was running wild,  
*Hallelujah!*

"Jack," the above-mentioned speaker's voice cried again, "Jack, I'm a single individual and it's a dangerous song, and I don't like to hear it, and I

have my reasons, and if you love me you'll sing something else and tomorrow we'll drink. . . ."

At the word "drink" Jack halted his drumming and singing and said in a virtuous tone, "The devil take the Jews, but you, dear Nosey Stern, you're my friend. I protect you, and if we drink together often enough I'll convert you, too. I'll be your godfather; if you're baptized you will go to Heaven, and if you have genius and study hard under me, you may even get to be a drummer. Yes, Nosey, you may yet go far; I'll drum the whole catechism into you tomorrow, when we drink together—but now open the gate; here stand two strangers and demand admission."

"Open the gate?" screeched Nosey Stern, and his voice all but failed. "That's not so quickly done, my dear Jack; you can't tell, you can never tell, and I'm a single individual. Veitel Rindskopf has the key and he is at the moment standing quietly in the corner mumbling his Eighteen Benedictions; one mustn't be interrupted in that. Jeckel the Fool is here, too, but right now he's passing his water. I'm a single individual."

"The devil take the Jews!" roared Jack the Drummer, and, laughing aloud at his own joke, made for the guardhouse and also lay down on the cot.

Now, while the Rabbi and his wife stood all by

themselves before the great locked gate, a rasping, nasal, somewhat mocking drawl was heard behind it: "Sternie, don't dawdle so long, take the keys from little Rindskopf's coat pocket, or take your nose and unlock the gate with that. The people have been standing and waiting a long time."

"The people?" anxiously cried the voice of the man who was called Nosey Stern. "I thought there was only one, and I beg you, fool, dear Jeckel Fool, won't you look out who's there?"

Then a small, well-barred window opened in the gate, and in it there appeared a yellow cap with two horns, and under it the merry, wrinkled jester's face of Jeckel the Fool. In the same instant the window was closed again, with an angry rasp: "Open up, open up, there's no one out there but a man and a woman."

"A man and a woman!" groaned Nosey Stern. "And when the gate is opened, the woman drops her skirt and is another man, and then there are two men and we're only three of us."

"Don't be a rabbit," Jeckel the Fool replied. "Take heart and show some courage."

"Courage!" cried Nosey Stern and laughed, glumly and bitterly. "Rabbit! Rabbit is a bad comparison; the rabbit is an unclean animal. Courage! I wasn't put here on account of my courage but on account



of my discretion. If too many come, I'm to yell. But I can't hold them off myself. My arm is weak, I have a fontanel, and I'm a single individual. If I'm shot, I'm dead. Then rich Mendel Reiss will sit down to dinner on the Sabbath and wipe the raisin sauce off his mouth and stroke his belly, and perhaps he'll say, 'That long Nosey Stern was a good little fellow, after all; if it hadn't been for him, they would have forced the gate. He let himself be shot dead for us; he was a good little fellow; it's a pity he's dead. . . . '

At this point the voice became gradually soft and tearful, but suddenly it reverted to a hasty, almost embittered tone: "Courage! And so that rich Mendel Reiss might wipe the raisin sauce off his mouth and stroke his belly and call me a good little fellow—for that I am to let myself be shot dead? Courage! Take heart! Little Strauss, he took heart and watched the jousting on the Römer yesterday and thought they wouldn't know him because he was wearing a purple coat, of velvet, three guilders a yard, with foxtails, all gold-embroidered, quite splendid—and they dusted his purple coat for him until the color went off and his back turned purple, too, and doesn't look like anything human any more. Courage! Crooked Leser took heart and called our rascally burgomaster a rascal, and they strung him

up by his feet between two dogs, and Jack the Drummer was drumming. Courage! Don't be a rabbit! Among many dogs the rabbit's done for. I'm a single individual, and I'm afraid."

"Swear to it!" cried Jeckel.

"I'm really afraid," Nosey Stern repeated with a sigh. "I know, the fear's in my blood and I have it from my late mother. . . ."

"Yes, yes," Jeckel the Fool interrupted him, "and your mother had it from her father, and he in turn had it from his father, and so your ancestors had it one from the other, back to your forefather, who took the field under King Saul against the Philistines and was the first to run away. But look, little Rindskopf is almost through; he has made his fourth bow and is already jumping like a flea at the Holy, Holy, Holy, and now he cautiously reaches into his pocket. . . ."

Indeed, the keys rattled, one creaking wing of the gate opened, and the Rabbi and his wife entered Jew Street, which was completely deserted. The turnkey, however, a little man with a good-natured, sour face, dreamily nodded like one who does not like to be disturbed in his thoughts, and having carefully closed the gate again, shuffled off into a corner behind it without saying a word, incessantly murmuring prayers. Less taciturn was Jeckel the

Fool, a thickset, slightly bowlegged fellow with a full, laughing, red face and an inhumanly big ham fist which he extended in welcome from the wide sleeves of his checkered jacket. Showing, or, rather, hiding behind him was a long, lean figure, the scrawny neck white-plumed by a fine cambric ruff, and the thin, pale face marvelously adorned with an almost incredibly long nose that was moving to and fro in fearful curiosity.

"God's welcome and a good holiday!" said Jeckel the Fool. "Don't be surprised that the street is now so empty and quiet. All our people are in the synagogue now, and you're just in time to hear the story of the sacrifice of Isaac read there. I know it; it's an interesting story and if I hadn't heard it thirty-three times already I'd be glad to hear it again this year. And it's an important story, for if Abraham had really killed Isaac and not the goat, there would now be more goats and fewer Jews in the world." And with madly gay grimaces Jeckel began to chant the following song from the Haggadah:

"A kiddy, a kiddy, was bought by Daddy who paid two zuzim—a kiddy, a kiddy!

"There came a kitty and ate the kiddy that was bought by Daddy who paid two zuzim—a kiddy, a kiddy!

"There came a doggy and bit the kitty that ate

the kiddy that was bought by Daddy who paid two zuzim—a kiddy, a kiddy!

“There came a little stick and beat the doggy that bit the kitty that ate the kiddy that was bought by Daddy who paid two zuzim—a kiddy, a kiddy!

“There came a little fire and burned the little stick that beat the doggy that bit the kitty that ate the kiddy that was bought by Daddy who paid two zuzim—a kiddy, a kiddy!

“There came a little water and doused the little fire that burned the little stick that beat the doggy that bit the kitty that ate the kiddy that was bought by Daddy who paid two zuzim—a kiddy, a kiddy!

“There came a little ox and drank the little water that doused the little fire that burned the little stick that beat the doggy that bit the kitty that ate the kiddy that was bought by Daddy who paid two zuzim—a kiddy, a kiddy!

“There came a little butcher and butchered the little ox that drank the little water that doused the little fire that burned the little stick that beat the doggy that bit the kitty that ate the kiddy that was bought by Daddy who paid two zuzim—a kiddy, a kiddy!

“There came the Angel of Death and killed the little butcher that killed the little ox that drank the little water that doused the little fire that burned



"You're Jeckel the Fool," laughed the Rabbi, "I know it by your words. I have heard of you often."

"Yes, yes," the other replied with droll modesty, "yes, yes, that's what fame does. A man is often known far and wide for a greater fool than he knows himself. But I try very hard to be a fool, and jump and shake myself to make the bells ring. Others find it easier. . . . But tell me, Rabbi, why are you traveling on the holiday?"

"My excuse," the Rabbi answered the question, "is written in the Talmud, where it says, 'Danger ousts the Sabbath.'"

"Danger!" long Nosey Stern screamed suddenly, acting as though in mortal terror; "danger! danger! Drummer Jack—drum, drum, danger! danger! Drummer Jack. . . ."

From outside, however, Jack the Drummer bel-  
lowed in his thick, beery voice: "Ten thousand  
thunders! The devil take the Jews. That's the third  
time you've woke me up today, Nosey Stern. Don't  
make me mad! When I'm mad I get to be like  
Satan himself, and then, as sure as I'm a Christian,  
I'll shoot through the window in the gate with my  
musket, and then let each man watch out for his  
nose!"

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot! I'm a single indi-  
vidual," Nosey Stern whimpered in terror, and

tightly pressed his face against the nearest wall, a position in which, trembling and softly praying, he remained.

"Say, say, what's happened?" Jeckel the Fool now asked with all that quick curiosity which even then characterized the Frankfort Jews.

But the Rabbi wrested himself loose and walked on with his wife, up Jew Street. "See, Lovely Sarah," he sighed, "how ill-guarded is Israel! False friends watch over its gates from the outside, and its sentinels within are Fear and Folly."

Slowly, the two wandered through the long, empty street, where only now and then a rosy girl's head peered out of a window while the sun festively mirrored itself in the bright panes. For the houses in the Jewish quarter were then still new and neat, also lower than now; it was not until the Jews had greatly multiplied in Frankfort, and yet were not allowed to enlarge their quarter, that they built one storey over the other, crowded together like sardines, and thus were crippled in body and soul. The part of the quarter which had remained standing after the great fire, the so-called Old Lane in whose tall black houses a grinning, damp race haggles, is a horrible memento of the Middle Ages. The older synagogue no longer exists; it was less spacious than the present one which was built later,

after the refugees from Nuremberg had been received into the community. It was located farther north. The Rabbi did not need to ask where; he could hear the jumble of extremely loud voices from far away. In the courtyard of the house of God he parted from his wife, washed his hands at the fountain, and entered that lower part of the synagogue where the men pray, while Lovely Sarah ascended a flight of stairs to reach the women's section.

This upper section was a kind of gallery with three rows of wooden, maroon-painted seats, each with a board hanging in back which could conveniently be leveled so as to support a prayer book. The women here sat gossiping together or stood in reverent prayer; at times they also went in curiosity to the lattice that ran along the eastern side and through the thin green bars of which one could look down upon the lower section of the synagogue. There, at high prayer desks, the men stood in their black cloaks, the pointed beards flowing down over white ruffs, and the skull-capped heads more or less shrouded by a square, white, sometimes gold-embroidered wool or silk scarf with the fringes prescribed by the Law. The walls of the synagogue were plainly white-washed and no kind of ornament was to be seen, except perhaps the gilded iron rail-



ing round the square dais from which the chapters of the Law are read, and the Holy Ark, a costly embossed coffer seemingly upheld by marble pillars with rich capitals whose floral work and foliation luxuriated delightfully, and covered by a curtain of azure-blue velvet on which a pious legend was worked in tinsel, pearls, and colorful gems. This was where the silver memorial lamp hung, and also where an inclosed platform rose, upon whose balustrade all sorts of sacred utensils were placed, among them the seven-branched candlestick. And before this, facing the Ark, stood the cantor, whose song was accompanied as if instrumentally by the voices of his two assistants, the bass and the soprano. For the Jews have banished all real instrumental music from their church, in the belief that hymns of praise to God will rise more edifyingly from the warm human breast than from cold organ pipes. Lovely Sarah felt a truly childlike pleasure when the cantor, an excellent tenor, now raised his voice and the grave, age-old melodies she knew so well blossomed forth in young, undreamed-of loveliness, while the bass growled the deep, dark notes in counterpoint, and the soprano, delicately and sweetly, trilled in the intervals. Lovely Sarah had never heard such singing in the synagogue of Bacherach, where the head of the congregation,

David Levi, acted as cantor. When this elderly, tottering man with the crumbled, bleating voice tried to trill like a young girl and in such violent effort feverishly shook his limply drooping arm, he was apt to induce laughter rather than devotion.

A sense of pious comfort mixed with feminine curiosity drew Lovely Sarah to the grille where she could look down into the lower section, the so-called *Männerschule*. She had never seen so large a number of coreligionists as she perceived down there, and a still cozier feeling entered her heart in the midst of so many people so nearly related to her by common descent, bent of mind, and suffering. But the woman's soul was still more deeply moved when three old men reverently stepped before the Holy Ark, drew the glittering curtain aside, unlocked the coffer, and carefully took out the book that God wrote with His own hand, and for whose preservation the Jews have suffered so much, so much misery and hatred, infamy and death—a thousand years of martyrdom. This book, a great roll of parchment, was wrapped like a princely child in a gaily embroidered cloak of red velvet; above, on the two wooden rollers, were two little silver vessels in which all sorts of pomegranates and tiny bells daintily moved and tinkled; and in

front, shields of gold incrustated with bright jewels hung on little silver chains. The cantor took the book, and as if it were a real child, a child for whose sake one has suffered much and who is therefore only the more beloved, he rocked it in his arms, pranced about with it, pressed it to his heart—and, shuddering under this touch, he raised his voice to so jubilantly devout a song of thanksgiving that to Lovely Sarah the pillars of the Holy Ark seemed to begin to bloom, and the wondrous flowers and leaves of the capitals to grow higher and higher, and all the sounds of the soprano to turn into nightingales, and the dome of the synagogue to burst under the powerful sounds of the bass, and the joy of God to pour down out of the blue sky. That was a beautiful psalm. The congregation repeated the final verse in chorus, and walking slowly toward the raised platform in the center of the synagogue was the cantor with the holy book, while men and boys hastily pressed forward to kiss its velvet covering, or even just to touch it. On the platform the little velvet cloak was removed from the holy book, as were the wrappings inscribed with colored letters, and from the opened parchment roll, in that singing tone which on the Feast of the Passover is still more peculiarly modulated, the cantor read the edifying story of Abraham's temptation.

Lovely Sarah had modestly withdrawn from the grille, and an ample, jewel-bedecked woman of middle age and rather affectedly benevolent demeanor had with a silent nod permitted her to look into her prayer book. The woman seemed to be no great scriptural scholar; for, as she murmured the prayers to herself in the manner of the women, who must not sing aloud, Lovely Sarah noticed that she took excessive liberties with the pronunciation of many words and dropped many a good line altogether. After a while, though, the good woman's limpid eyes rose languidly, an insipid smile passed over her face that was red and white as porcelain, and, in a voice that sought to melt as aristocratically as possible, she said to Lovely Sarah, "He sings very well. But in Holland I've still heard much better singing. You are a stranger and don't know perhaps that he is the cantor from Worms, and that they want to keep him here if he will be content with four hundred guilders a year. He's a dear man, and his hands are like alabaster. I think a great deal of a beautiful hand. A beautiful hand adorns the whole person." With that, the good woman complacently laid her hand, which really was still beautiful, on the back of the prayer desk, and, indicating by a graceful bow of her head that she did not like to be interrupted while talking, she

added, "The little singer is just a child and looks quite emaciated. The basso is far too ugly, and our Stern once said very wittily, 'The basso is a bigger fool than one has to demand of a basso.' All three of them eat at my restaurant—but you don't know, perhaps, that I'm Elle Schnapper."

Lovely Sarah thanked her for this information, and Schnapper-Elle in turn related to her in detail how she had once been in Amsterdam and there had been exposed to many base designs on account of her beauty, how three days before Pentecost she had come to Frankfort and married Schnapper, how he had died at last, and on his deathbed said the most touching things, and how hard it was for a restaurant-keeper to keep her hands pretty. Now and then she would cast scornful side glances, probably at some irreverent young women who scrutinized her dress. It was unusual enough: a vast, billowing, white satin skirt with all the animals of Noah's Ark embroidered on it in gaudy colors; a waist of gold cloth like a cuirass; sleeves of red velvet, slit yellow; on the head a tremendously tall cap; around the neck an almighty ruff of stiff white linen, as well as a silver chain from which all sorts of memorial coins, cameos, and curios—among others, a large picture of the city of Amsterdam—hung down over her bosom. But the dress of the

other women was just as odd and probably compounded of the fashions of different times, and there was many a little lady strewn with gold and diamonds who rather resembled a walking jeweler's shop. To be sure, the law at that time prescribed a certain garb for the Frankfort Jews: to distinguish them from the Christians, the men were supposed to wear yellow patches on their cloaks, and the women high, blue-striped veils on their headgear. In the Jewish quarter, however, not much attention was paid to this municipal ordinance; and on holidays especially, and above all in the synagogue, the women sought to outdo one another in splendor of raiment, partly so as to be envied, and partly to show the wealth and credit-standing of their spouses.

In the synagogue, while the chapters of the Law are read from the Books of Moses, there usually occurs a slight lull in devotion. The worshippers make themselves comfortable and sit down, whisper with their neighbors about secular affairs, or go out into the courtyard to catch a breath of fresh air. Little boys meanwhile make bold to visit their mothers in the women's section, and there, by then, devotion may well have receded even further: there will be chattering, scandal-mongering, laughing, and as everywhere else the younger women will

jest about the old ones, who will in turn complain of frivolous youth and the degeneration of the times. And just as there was a chief singer on the ground floor of the Frankfort synagogue, the upper section had its chief gossip. This was Puppy Reiss, a flat-chested, greenish female who sniffed every bit of trouble and always had a scandal on the tip of her tongue. The usual target of her barbs was poor Schnapper-Elle, and she could be very funny aping the other's forced gentility as well as the languishing decorum with which she would accept the mocking compliments of youth.

"Do you know," cried Puppy Reiss, "what Schnapper-Elle said yesterday? 'If I weren't beautiful and clever and beloved, I wouldn't want to be alive.' "

There was loud tittering and Schnapper-Elle, standing nearby and noticing that it was at her expense, contemptuously lifted her nose and sailed off like a proud galleon, to a more distant place. Birdie Ochs, a rotund, somewhat clumsy woman, pityingly remarked that if Schnapper-Elle was vain and obtuse, she also was kind of heart and doing a lot of good for people who needed it.

"Especially for Nosey Stern," hissed Puppy Reiss. And all who knew about the tender liaison laughed all the louder.

"Do you know," the venomous Puppy added, "that Nosey even sleeps at Schnapper-Elle's house now . . . ? But look, down there—Susie Flörsheim is wearing the necklace that Daniel Fläsch gave to her husband in pawn. Fläsch's wife is furious. . . . Now she's talking to Susie. . . . How amiably they shake hands, and yet hate each other like Midian and Moab! Those sweet smiles! Just see that you don't eat one another for love! I want to hear that conversation."

And like a stalking beast of prey Puppy Reiss sneaked up and heard the two women exchange feeling lamentations about the hard work they had done in the past week, cleaning up at home and scouring all the kitchenware—which has to be done before the Feast of the Passover—lest some tiny crumb of leavened bread still cling to it. They also talked of the laborious baking of the unleavened bread. Mrs. Fläsch in particular could complain of her trouble at the community bakery, for by the order of lots she had not been able to start baking until late afternoon on the very eve of the holiday, and then old Hannah had kneaded the dough all wrong, and the maids had rolled it much too thin, half the breads had burned in the oven, and finally it had rained so hard that water constantly dripped through the boarded roof of the bakery, and thus



wet and weary they had been obliged to work far into the night.

"And that, my dear Mrs. Flörsheim," Mrs. Fläsch added, with a considerate kindness which was anything but genuine, "that was a little bit your fault, too, because you didn't send your people over to help me with the baking."

"Oh, I'm sorry," the other replied. "My people were too busy; the merchandise for the Fair has to be packed, we have so much to do now, my husband. . . ."

"I know," Mrs. Fläsch broke in quickly, biting,ly, "I know you have much to do—many pledges and good business and necklaces. . . ."

A poisoned word was about to leave her lips and Mrs. Flörsheim had turned lobster-red already, when suddenly Puppy Reiss screeched, "For God's sake, the strange woman lies dying—water! water!"

Pale as death, Lovely Sarah lay in a faint, and crowding about her was a swarm of bustling, wailing women. One of them held her head, another her arm; a few old crones sprinkled her with water from the little glasses that hung behind their prayer desks so that they might wash their hands in case they should accidentally touch their own bodies; others got an old lemon stuffed with spices—left over from the last fast day, when it had served for

nerve-strengthening sniffs—and held it under the unconscious woman's nose. Finally, with a deep sigh of exhaustion, Lovely Sarah opened her eyes. Her silent glances gave thanks for the kindly care. But ringing up from below now was the solemn sound of the Eighteen Benedictions, which no one is allowed to miss, and the busy women scurried back to their seats to offer this prayer as prescribed—standing, and with their faces turned toward the East, in the direction of Jerusalem. Birdie Ochs, Schnapper-Elle, and Puppy Reiss stayed the longest with Lovely Sarah, the first two eagerly offering aid, and the last inquiring once more why she had so suddenly fainted.

Lovely Sarah's faint had a very special cause. It is the custom in the synagogue for anyone who has escaped from great danger to stand up after the reading of the chapters of the Law and publicly to thank Divine Providence for his salvation. And as Rabbi Abraham rose in the synagogue below for such thanksgiving and Lovely Sarah recognized her husband's voice, she noted how its tone gradually changed to the dark murmurs of the prayer for the dead; she heard the names of her relatives and friends, accompanied by that word of blessing which is reserved for the departed; and the last hope left Lovely Sarah's soul, and her soul was

torn by the certainty that her friends and relatives had really been killed—that her little niece was dead, that her two little cousins, Blossom and Birdie, were dead, that little Gottschalk also was dead—all murdered and dead! The agony of this realization might have killed her, too, if a merciful faint had not enveloped her senses.

### THIRD CHAPTER

As Lovely Sarah descended after the end of the services, the Rabbi stood in the courtyard of the synagogue, awaiting his wife. With a cheery nod he ushered her out into the street, where the former quiet had completely vanished and a noisy, milling throng was seen instead. Bearded black-coats recalling an ant heap; women fluttering resplendently like rose chafers; young girls who were not allowed to enter the synagogue and now came bounding out of houses to meet their parents, bowing curly heads to receive their blessing—all were cheerful and gay, and strolled up and down the street in blissful anticipation of a good dinner, whose delicious aroma already made mouths water as it rose from the black, chalk-marked pots which laughing maids had just fetched out of the big community oven.

Especially notable in this jumble was the figure of a Spanish knight whose youthful features showed that intriguing pallor which women usually blame on an unlucky love affair, and men on a lucky one. His walk, though insouciantly sauntering, was of a somewhat studied elegance; the feathers on his beret moved not so much in the breeze as from the

aristocratic sway of his head; more than just the necessary clatter issued from his golden spurs and sword-chain. He seemed to be carrying his sword on his arm, and its jeweled hilt sparkled out of the white cavalier's cloak that enveloped his slender limbs with apparent nonchalance and yet betrayed the most careful arrangement of the folds. Now and then, partly with curiosity and partly with the air of the connoisseur, he would approach the passing members of the fair sex, calmly look straight into their eyes, prolong the inspection whenever a face seemed worth while, throw a few quick words of flattery to many a pretty child, and be on his carefree way without waiting for the effect. He had circled Lovely Sarah several times, and every time had been repulsed by her commanding gaze or by the enigmatically smiling mien of her husband; but finally, proudly throwing diffidence to the winds, he boldly blocked the couple's path, and with foppish assurance and honeyed gallantry delivered the following address:

"Señora, I swear! Hear me, Señora: I swear by the roses of the two Castiles, by the hyacinths of Aragon and the pomegranate blossoms of Andalusia! By the sun which illuminates all Spain, with all its flowers, onions, pea soups, forests, mountains, mules, goats, and Old Christians! By the canopy of

heaven, on which this sun is merely a golden tassel! And by the God who sits upon the canopy of heaven and day and night ponders the creation of new lovely feminine forms—I swear, Señora, you are the most beautiful woman I’ve seen in German lands, and should it please you to accept my services, I beg of you the favor, grace, and permission to call myself your knight, and in mock and earnest wear your colors.”

A blushing pain passed over Lovely Sarah’s face. With one of those glances that are most cutting from the gentlest eye, in a tone most withering if struck by a soft, trembling voice, the deeply hurt woman answered:

“My noble lord—if you wish to be my knight you must fight whole nations, and in this fight there is little thanks to be won, and less honor. If you wish to wear my colors you must sew yellow patches on your cloak or don a blue-striped scarf—for these are my colors, the colors of my house, the house which is called Israel and is most wretched, and which the sons of fortune mock in the streets.”

The Spaniard’s cheeks turned purple, and infinite embarrassment spread over all his features. “Señora,” he said, almost stuttering, “you misunderstood me. . . . an innocent jest, but, by God! no mockery, no mockery of Israel. . . . I myself come

from the House of Israel; my grandfather was a Jew, perhaps my father even. . . .”

“And most assuredly, Señor, your uncle is a Jew,” suddenly broke in the Rabbi who had calmly watched the scene, and with a merry, bantering glance he added, “and I will personally vouch for it that Don Isaac Abarbanel, the great rabbi’s nephew, has sprung from the best blood in Israel, if not in fact from the royal race of David.”

Now the sword-chain clattered under the Spaniard’s cloak and his cheeks blanched again, assuming an ashen pallor; his upper lip twitched as if scorn were wrestling with pain; the deadliest anger grinned out of his eyes, and in an utterly changed, ice-cold, sharp-edged voice he said, “Señor Rabbi! You know me. Well, then you know who I am. And if the fox knows that I am of the lion’s brood, he will take care not to endanger his fox’s beard and not to stir my wrath. How should the fox judge the lion? Only he who feels like the lion can see his failings.”

“Oh, I see quite well,” replied the Rabbi and a pensive gravity darkened his brow, “I see quite well how pride makes the proud lion doff his princely skin and wrap himself in the bright scaly armor of the crocodile, because it is fashionable to be a voracious, cunning, grinning crocodile. What are

the lesser animals to do when the lion denies himself? But beware, Don Isaac: you were not made for the element of the crocodile. Water—you well know what I mean—water is your misfortune and you will sink. Your kingdom is not of water; the feeblest trout can do better in it than the king of the forest. Do you recall the currents of the Tagus seeking to devour you . . . ?”

All at once Don Isaac burst into loud laughter, hugged the Rabbi, closed his mouth with kisses, and leaped high for joy, with his spurs clattering so as to frighten the passing Jews. Then, in his natural gay and hearty voice, he shouted, “Faith, you’re Abraham of Bacherach! And it was a good joke and also an act of friendship when you jumped into the water from Toledo’s Alcantara Bridge and grabbed your friend, a better drinker than swimmer, by the scruff of the neck and pulled him up on dry land. I was on the threshold of some very thorough research on whether gold nuggets might really be found on the bottom of the Tagus, and whether the Romans were right to call it the Golden River. I tell you, I still catch cold from the mere memory of that water party.”

With these words the Spaniard gestured as if to shake off drops of water clinging to him. But to the Rabbi’s face good cheer had returned, and he re-



peatedly pressed the hand of his friend, each time saying, "I'm glad!"

"And so am I," said the other. "We haven't seen each other for seven years; at our farewell I was still a young sprig, and you, you were so sedate and serious already. . . . But what became of the fair donna who drew so many sighs from you at the time, well-rhymed sighs that you accompanied on the lute?"

\* "Hush, hush, the donna can hear us. She is my wife, and today you've furnished her with a sample of your own taste and poetic talent."

It was not without some aftertaste of his earlier embarrassment that the Spaniard greeted the beautiful woman who now, with charming kindness, regretted having grieved her husband's friend by her expressions of displeasure.

"Oh, Señora," Don Isaac replied, "the man who reached with a clumsy hand for a rose must not complain if the thorns scratch. When the evening star gold-sparklingly mirrors itself in the blue tide. . . ."

"For God's sake," the Rabbi broke in, "I beg you to stop it. If we are to wait till the evening star gold-sparklingly mirrors itself in the blue tide, my wife will starve. She has not eaten since yesterday, and in the meantime has suffered much distress and hardship."

"Well, then I'll take you to the best restaurant in Israel," Don Isaac exclaimed, "to the house of my friend Schnapper-Elle, which is near here. I can smell the bewitching fragrance—the restaurant's, of course. Oh, Abraham, if you knew how this fragrance attracts me! It is what has so often lured me to the tents of Jacob, ever since I began my sojourn in this town. Otherwise I have no special liking for the company of God's people, and verily, it is not to pray but to eat that I visit Jew Street. . . ."

"You've never loved us, Don Isaac."

"Yes," continued the Spaniard, "I love your cooking much better than your faith. *It* lacks the proper sauce. And your own selves I never could quite stomach. Even in your best days, in the reign of my ancestor David, who was king over Judah and Israel, I doubt that I could have lasted it among you. Early one morning I should certainly have escaped from the fortress of Zion and emigrated to Phoenicia, or to Babylon, where the joy of life was foaming in the temple of the gods. . . ."

"You're blaspheming, Isaac," darkly muttered the Rabbi. "You are far worse than a Christian. You are a heathen, an idolator."

"Yes, I'm a heathen. And as obnoxious to me as the arid, joyless Hebrews are the gloomy, self-tormenting Nazarenes. May our dear Lady of Sidon,

holy Astarte, forgive me for kneeling and praying before the sorrowed Mother of the Crucified. My knee and tongue alone pay homage to death, my heart has remained true to life.

"Don't look so glum, though," went on the Spaniard with his speech, as he saw how little it appeared to edify the Rabbi, "don't look at me with loathing. My nose has kept the faith. When chance brought me into this street one day about noon and I smelled the well-known odors from the Jews' kitchens—then the same longing seized me which our forefathers felt in thinking back to the flesh-pots of Egypt; tasty childhood memories awoke in me; before my mind's eye there reappeared the carp in brown raisin sauce which my aunt knew how to prepare so edifyingly each Friday evening; I saw the steamed mutton with garlic and horse-radish again, fit to revive the dead, and the soup with the rapturously swimming dumplings—and my soul melted like the song of a nightingale in love, and ever since that day I have been eating at the restaurant of my friend Donna Schnapper-Elle."

This establishment had meanwhile been reached. Schnapper-Elle herself stood in the doorway of her house, amiably greeting the hungry strangers who crowded in from the Fair. Behind her, peering over her shoulder, long Nosey Stern stood anxiously yet

curiously scrutinizing the arrivals. With exaggerated dignity Don Isaac approached our hostess, who answered his waggishly deep bows with endless curtsies; then he removed his right glove, wrapped his hand in a corner of his cloak, and thus took the hand of Schnapper-Elle which he drew slowly across his mustache and said:

“Señora! Your eyes vie with the fires of the sun; but while an egg grows the harder, the more you boil it, my heart keeps softening the longer it is boiled by the flaming rays of your eyes. Out of the yolk of my heart flutters Amor, the winged god, and seeks a cozy nest in your bosom—this bosom, Señora, with what am I to compare it? In all creation there is no flower, no fruit, resembling it. This plant is unique of its kind. Though the storm strips the tenderest rose, your bosom is a winter rose defying every gale. Though age merely yellows and shrinks the sour lemon, your bosom rivals the sweetest pineapple for tenderness and color. Oh, Señora, even though the city of Amsterdam may be as fair as you told me yesterday, and the day before and every day, the ground on which it rests is a thousand times fairer. . . .”

The knight uttered these last words with feigned timidity and languorous squints at the big picture suspended from Schnapper-Elle's neck; Nosey

Stern looked searchingly down from above, and the lauded bosom began to heave so that the city of Amsterdam rocked to and fro.

"Oh," Schnapper-Elle sighed, "virtue is worth more than beauty. What good is beauty to me? My youth will pass, and since Schnapper is dead—he had beautiful hands, at least—what help is beauty to me?" Then she sighed once more, and like an echo, almost inaudibly, Nosey Stern sighed behind her.

"What good is beauty to you?" cried Don Isaac. "Oh, Donna Schnapper-Elle, don't sin against the bounty of creative Nature! Don't abuse her loveliest gifts! She would take fearful vengeance. These enrapturing eyes would become fatuously glazed; these winsome lips would flatten to the point of tastelessness; this chaste, love-seeking body would turn into an unwieldy tallow keg; the city of Amsterdam would come to rest on a murky morass. . . ."

And so, item by item, he pictured Schnapper-Elle's present appearance until the poor woman came to feel strangely perturbed and tried to escape from the knight's eerie conversation. She was doubly glad when she caught sight of Lovely Sarah at this moment and could make the most urgent inquiries whether the lady had quite recovered from

her fainting spell, and she promptly plunged into a lively discourse in which all her spurious gentility and genuine kindness of heart came to the fore. With more circumstance than circumspection, she told the sad story of how she herself had almost fainted with horror when the canal boat brought her to Amsterdam, a total stranger, and the rascal carrying her trunk took her not to a respectable inn but to a brazen bawdyhouse, as she had soon found out by the heavy brandy-drinking and the immoral propositions. And, as said before, she would have actually fainted if she could have dared to close her eyes for one instant in the six weeks she spent in that suspicious house. . . .

"On account of my virtue," she closed, "I couldn't dare it. And it all happened to me on account of my beauty. But virtue will last when beauty has passed."

Luckily—for Don Isaac was just about to launch into a critical analysis of the details of this story—squinty-eyed Aaron Hirschkuh of Homburg on the Lahn came out of the house with a white napkin in his teeth, and angrily complained that the soup was long on the table and the guests were seated and the hostess was missing. . . .

(The conclusion and the succeeding chapters have been lost through no fault of the author's.)



HEINE'S LETTERS ON  
THE RABBI OF BACHERACH





To Rudolf Christiani, May 24, 1824

. . . . In Berlin I have been. . . . greatly importuned to publish something big again before long, and have promised to deliver two volumes by the next Easter Fair. There is nothing down yet except trifles, however, although now I am at a great novelette that is very hard on me.

To Moses Moser, June 25, 1824

. . . . Aside from that, I do plenty of chronicle-studying, and in particular very much historia Judaica. The latter as touching on the Rabbi, and also, perhaps, as filling an inner need. Quite peculiar feelings move me as I thumb through those sad annals—a wealth of instruction and pain. More and more the spirit of Jewish history is revealed to me, and this spiritual armor surely will serve me well in times to come. Of my Rabbi I only have written 1/3; my maladies have caused a miserable interruption and God knows whether I'll complete him early and well. On this occasion I also found out that I lack any narrative talent; but perhaps I wrong myself and it is just that the subject is unyielding. The Passover celebration has turned out all right. I still owe you thanks for telling me about the Haggadah, and have to ask you besides to let me have a literal translation of the Caholach Manga and the little legend, Maaseh be Rabbi Leser. Also to send me the Psalm verse from the evening prayer, "Ten thousand men-at-arms stand before Solomon's bed," in literal translation. I may give the Rabbi an adjunct of a few sheets: "Illustrations" in the English manner, an extract of original ideas about Jews and their history.—Benjamin of Tudela, who is now traveling all around my desk, sends

*you his best regards. He wishes that Zunz would some time edit and publish him in translation; the translation and edition by the French Dr. Witte which I have in front of me is beneath any criticism, nothing but grade school humor. On the Frankfort Jews Schudt has been a great help to me; I have read both quarto volumes from beginning to end and don't know whether I've been more angry about the rishus which is poured out over every page, or whether I've been more amused by the asininity with which the rishus is presented. How we Germans have perfected ourselves! Now all that I still need is notes on the Spanish Jews in the 15th century, and especially on their academies in Spain about that time—where can I find something? Or rather, fifty years before their expulsion. Interesting that in the same year in which they were expelled the new country of religious freedom, America, was discovered.*

*To Moses Moser, July 20, 1824*

*. . . . Last night, it seems, I fell asleep while reading Basnage.*

*Ad vocem Basnage, I cannot sufficiently express my admiration of this writer. He is a man of great brilliance of mind, deep historic perception, nobility of heart, pure impartiality—a man of incalculable merit. It is only now, after realizing his little means and his great efforts, that I learn to value him.*

*To Moses Moser, October 25, 1824*

*. . . . This summer I have written hardly a thing. . . . Of the Rabbi so little that barely 1/3 of it is written. He will be very large, though, probably a fat volume, and*

*with ineffable love I bear the whole work in my heart. After all, it issues wholly from love, not from a vain lust for fame. On the contrary, if I should listen to the voice of outward prudence, I should not write it at all. I can see in advance how much I shall throw away and how much hostility I shall provoke. But just because it issues from love it will be an immortal book, an eternal lamp in the cathedral of God, not a sputtering stage light. Much that I had written in this book has been wiped out again; it is not until now that I have succeeded in grasping the whole, and I only ask God to give me the hours of health to write it down in peace. Do not smile at this cackling before I have laid my eggs. Do not smile at my long hatching, either; a common goose egg (I do not mean Dr. Gans) is more swiftly hatched than the dove's egg of the Holy Ghost. You forgot to send me a few notes I requested in my last letter in behalf of the Rabbi. To Dr. Zunz I send a thousand thanks for his information on the Spanish Jews. Although it is extremely scanty, Zunz has still helped me more with a single astute hint than several quarto volumes vainly rummaged through, and unwittingly he will have influenced the Rabbi, too.*

*Since Zunz is no formalist, I can save myself a special letter by telling you what you are to say to him. That is, besides my thanks, (1) that I love him, (2) that I esteem him, (3) that I wish he would be so kind as to point out to me where I can find good material on the family of the Abarbanels (also called Abravanel).—I did not find much in Basnage. The painful perusal of Basnage was finally concluded about the middle of last month. I did not find what I was especially looking for, but I discovered a great deal that was new and that stirred up a great many new ideas and emotions. As a whole the book is*

*magnificent, and on September 11th I indicated part of the impression that it made on me in the following reflection:*

*(To Edom!)*

*A brotherly forbearance  
Has united us for ages:  
You, you tolerate my breathing  
And I tolerate your rages.*

*Just a few benighted eras  
Found you feeling rather odd,  
Coloring your loving-pious  
Little talons with my blood.*

*Later we became more cordial,  
Day by day our friendship grew—  
For I also started raging  
And I almost seem like you.*

*However, as one word leads to another, one verse also leads to another, and so I'll let you read some less important verses that I made up last night while going for a stroll on Weender Street in spite of rain and wind, and thinking of you and of the joy when I'll be able to send you the Rabbi some day, and I already rhymed the verses I was going to write on the white cover of the copy as a preface for you—and since I have no secrets from you I'll let you read these verses here and now:*

*Break out in loud lament,  
You somber martyr-song  
That my flame-silent spirit  
Has harbored for so long.*









*It pierces every ear,  
And through it to the heart;  
I have conjured up with power  
The thousand-year-old smart.*

*The people great and small,  
The chilly lords, all weep;  
Women and flowers are weeping,  
The stars in heaven weep.*

*And all the tears flow on,  
In silent union, south,  
Flowing and overflowing  
Into the Jordan's mouth.*

*To Ludwig Robert, March 4, 1825*

*. . . . I will mention only that for a year, due to my head ailment which only now is gradually disappearing, I could not write much of any importance. I only worked . . . . on my "Rabbi" who is not yet half finished and not fit for present communication, either.*

*To Moses Moser, April 1, 1825*

*. . . . Outwardly, my situation has not changed very much. I have been working at law all winter. . . . and if at this moment my pains were not recurring so badly I should now put in for my LL.D. But in the state in which I am now I can't think of it, which is the more deplorable as I was going to write a lot after the LL.D.—among other things, the end of the Rabbi, who weighs on my mind like a ton. This unselfish work will also be the most solid.*

To Moses Moser, July 1, 1825

. . . . Then I am working as strenuously as possible—law, history, the Rabbi, etc. The latter is making slow progress, with each line a struggle; but I'm being urged to go on undaunted, by the consciousness I carry within myself that only I can write this book, and that the writing of it is a useful, God-pleasing deed. But I shall drop this theme by which I am easily induced to look at myself in the mirror and brag about the greatness of my own soul.—

Zunz, through you, has told me once before that in the 15th century the most eminent school of the Spanish Jews was in Toledo; but I should like to know whether this is to be understood as the end of the 15th century as well? He also named Seville and Granada to me, but I think I read in Basnage that they had already been expelled from Granada at some earlier time. Also, as I wrote to you, I should like to find out something about the Abarbanel which I am unable to get from Christian sources. Wolf has listed all those in his library. Basnage is meager. Schudt has scraped up a bit, too. Bartolocci I haven't read yet. The Spanish historians have little, incomprehensibly little, about the Jews. Altogether, an Egyptian darkness prevails.—By the end of the year I mean to have the Rabbi completed. It will be a book which the Zunzes of all centuries will quote as a source. — . . . I . . . am at bottom an ecstatic, i.e., inflamed to the point of self-sacrifice for the idea and always urged on to submerge myself in it; but on the other hand I have realized what the enjoyment of life is, and have found pleasure in it, and raging in me now is the great struggle between my clear rationalism, which upholds the enjoyment of life and rejects as folly all self-sacrificing ardor, and my ecstatic tendency, which often flares up unawares and grips me forcefully and some

*day may yet pull me down again into its age-old realm—unless it would be better to say, pull up. . . . But more about this another time. . . . This theme, too, you are going to find again in the Rabbi.*

*To Moses Moser, July 22, 1825*

*. . . . Give Zunz my most cordial regards; tell him that I thank him very much for his notes. There really were Jews living in Granada in 1492, for they are expressly mentioned in the capitulation of that city. About Abarbanel I've dug up the dissertation by Majus (Vita Abarbanelis) and compiled all Christian sources—very meager, though.*

*To Moses Moser, Autumn, 1825*

*. . . . Today I may yet send you a poem from the Rabbi; unfortunately I was interrupted again. I earnestly beg you not to let anyone see the poem or hear what I tell you of my private affairs. A young Spanish Jew, a Jew at heart, but baptized out of luxurious frivolity, is corresponding with the young Jehudah Abarbanell and sends him that poem, translated from the Moorish. Perhaps he still shrinks from writing candidly to his friend of a not very noble deed, but he sends him that poem.—Don't think about it.—As soon as I find some rest, in Hamburg or Berlin, I'll go on with the Rabbi.*

*To Moses Moser, December 14, 1825*

*. . . . I should be very sorry if my own baptism could appear in any favorable light to you. I assure you, if the laws had permitted the theft of silver spoons I should not have been baptized. . . .*

*Last Saturday I was in the synagogue and had the pleasure of hearing with my own ears how Dr. Salomon inveighed against the baptized Jews, and especially taunted those whom "the mere hope of getting a position (ipsisima verba) induces to desert the faith of their fathers."*

*I assure you, it was a good sermon and I intend to visit the man one of these days.—Cohn is grand to me. I eat with him on Shabbes; he gathers fiery kugel on my head and I, contritely, eat this holy national dish which has done more for the preservation of Judaism than all three issues of the magazine.<sup>1</sup> But then, of course, it also had a larger sale.*

*. . . . God willing, the 2nd and 3rd part of the travel book will consist of a new sort of Travel Pictures, Letters on Hamburg, and the Rabbi—now unfortunately resting again.*

*To Moses Moser, January 9, 1826*

*. . . . At bottom there are now so many inner disturbances that I can think of nothing outward. If only I get some peace, so I can finish the Rabbi. . . .*

*I am now hated by Christian and Jew. I deeply repent my baptism; so far I can't see at all that I've been better off since—on the contrary, I've since had nothing but bad luck.*

*To Moses Moser, February 14, 1826*

*. . . . I'll be staying here [in Hamburg] a little longer than I had intended. There are all sorts of things to be worked out. I also want to finish the Rabbi here—against your narrow-minded advice—and he is to appear already*

<sup>1</sup> *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, 1822–1823.

*in the 2nd part of my travel pieces, the first part of which will come out this Easter, published by Hoffmann and Campe.*

*To Leopold Zunz, May 1826*

*. . . . In the second part of the "Travel Pictures" there will appear the "Rabbi," greatly cut—*

*To Karl Simrock, May 26, 1826*

*. . . . In the next volume of my Travel Pictures you shall see the Rhine flow.—*

*To Joseph Lehmann, May 26, 1826*

*. . . . In the second volume [of "Travel Pictures"] the "Rabbi" is to appear, and then I expect to be altogether hated in the Christian world. I hope that by then I'll no longer care much about it.*

*To Moses Moser, July 8, 1826*

*. . . . The second part [of "Travel Pictures"] is to be printed by the end of the year. It is to contain much that is curious, for instance, the Rabbi. "Thee never wisely protected with counsel the goddess of wisdom, Pallas Athena!" You're right, and you're always right.*

*To Friedrich Merkel, August 24, 1832*

*. . . . I've failed with a novel; but in a collection which I'll make up this winter and where I'll throw in the "Rabbi," too, I shall probably include some novelistic pieces.—*

*Julius Campe to Heine, November 5, 1833*

. . . . On Sunday afternoon, about mealtime, the house in which your mother lives burned down. I do not know the details of her misfortune, since your brother has not yet been to see me. But I can tell you with pretty fair certainty that salvage was not to be thought of. If by any chance you had manuscripts or the like out there, they will hardly have stood the ordeal by fire!—

*To Julius Campe, March 1, 1837*

. . . . Since all the manuscripts which I might have added as filler [to the projected Collected Works] were burned at my mother's, the increase will not be very great; but in any event it will probably make up a volume if I patch together various things in scattered sheets, and perhaps some things that have not yet been printed at all.

*To Julius Campe, March 28, 1840*

. . . . Am actually in need of very much money this year, and if I had more time today I should talk over the publication of a 4th part of the Salon with you. But for this one, that is understood, you will now pay 1000 marks banco, and I shall turn it out perfectly by the addition of topical material; but as I want to write something special for it, I can't deliver it before the middle of June.

*To Julius Campe, April 18, 1840*

. . . . I am glad to be all clear with you at last, and also to have the amount for the fourth Salon volume settled.

*I'll get right at it now, and I think you will have the manuscript in six weeks; trust me to fix the book up nicely.—*

*To Julius Campe, May 8, 1840*

*. . . . I shall not leave Paris for the seashore before I have the fourth volume of the Salon prepared for you. I shall augment it with a large unpublished work which will be very topical. . . .*

*To the Baroness Betty Rothschild, June 1, 1840*

*. . . . As promised, I send you enclosed the beginning of my novel, "The Feast of the Passover," and the beginning of my "Ludwig Börne." The former will appear this fall. . . .*

*To Julius Campe, June 10, 1840*

*. . . . I shall save this [the dedication to Laube] for the fourth Salon volume which will be sent to you before I leave for Granville. I am having it copied now, and I believe the book will be well received.—*

*To Julius Campe, July 17 or 18, 1840*

*. . . . Since early this morning I have been busy preparing the manuscript for the fourth part of the Salon. . . . The fourth part consists:*

*(1) of an unpublished genre picture of which I had no more than a fragment (the rest was burned at my mother's) and which I wanted to round out here. I am now rounding it out in the scantiest man-*

*ner; it will amount to about seven or eight sheets and I'll send you the manuscript in two shipments by letter mail. I'll send the first portion the day after tomorrow, so that the printing can begin at once.*

*To Julius Campe, July 21, 1840*

*Enclosed you receive the beginning of the fourth part of the Salon. The sequel, the written manuscript which I'll send to you one of these days in two letters, will amount to about twice as much. . . .*

*The title of the first item of the fourth Salon part has been pasted on. In case the slip of paper should be lost, I repeat the title:*

#### THE RABBI OF BACHERACH

##### *A Fragment*

*I wrote this medieval genre picture about fifteen years ago, and what I offer now is merely the outline of the book that was burned at my mother's—perhaps to my best interest. For in the sequel there emerged the most heretical notions which would have aroused a great hue and cry among both Jews and Christians.*

*To Julius Campe, July 24, 1840*

*. . . . Yesterday I sent you the second chapter of the Rabbi; today I send you the third which constitutes the conclusion. . . . I hope you will like the Rabbi, and I believe that the theme will stir up topical interests and sympathies. At least this book, as a noteworthy, original work, will occupy a respectable position among my other books.*



## EPILOGUE



## EPILOGUE<sup>1</sup>

BY ERICH LOEWENTHAL

Few of Heine's works pose more puzzles for the reader than *The Rabbi of Bacherach*. First of all, this is due to the fragmentary nature of a story that consists of only three chapters and suddenly, in the full flow of the narrative, breaks off before the action has yet reached its peak. Then there is the peculiar mixture of serious themes and stark tragedy with glaring flashes of satire and a hilarious, farcical mood which seems to hold nothing sacred—a change of style which begins in the course of the second chapter and dominates the third, intertwining the lofty and the ridiculous. Finally, inescapably, the question arises how it was possible for the mocking wit, the man who left the faith of his fathers at an early age, "with ineffable love" to write the moving pages of this historical genre picture, the first ghetto story in the German language.

In his parental home in Düsseldorf, although traditional customs might outwardly be observed, the boy received no real Jewish education. From his mother he acquired the deism of the Enlightenment; if on occasion he inclined to an ecstatic religiosity, it was directed toward the Catholic religion of his environment. As a student in Bonn and in Göttingen he had Christian friends only. It was not until his semesters at Berlin University that his Jewish descent became an inner reality. And even then he strongly emphasized that it was not the experience of the Jewish faith which stirred him; as "a born foe of all positive religions" he would not be a protagonist of the religion "that first introduced the moralistic carping which now causes us so much agony." Rather, he was overcome by the social, the political, consciousness of being Jewish, by a feeling of cohesion with those friends

<sup>1</sup> The Epilogue as given here is a shortened version of the original.

who, like himself, experienced the historic union. For it was only then, in that circle, that Jewish history came close to him.

The romantic tradition is evident in this resolve to write a historical novel or a historical novelette. Like many others, Heine felt the urge to give artistic expression to the future-pregnant period of transition from the Middle Ages to the awakening modern age. The Jewish impressions of his sojourn in Berlin, the friendship with Moser and Zunz, the work in the "Society for Jewish Culture and Science," the awakened interest in Jewish history—all these impelled him, in the proposed historical novel, to seek the spirit of history in the spirit of *Jewish* history.

At the beginning of May, 1823, full of "intellectual inspiration and refreshment," Heine went back to Göttingen. The plan of the *Rabbi* went with him, and his friends in Berlin knew all about the project. It was already decided, too, that the plot ought to start with the description of a Passover celebration at home. This was why Heine, ignorant of Hebrew, had requested notes on the contents of the Haggadah from Moser and had taken them along when he left, and why he soon asked his friend for literal translations of several Hebrew passages. Above all, with Zunz for a guide, he set out thoroughly to study the sources in the field of Jewish history—although there, of course, his lack of a knowledge of Hebrew restricted him to the works of Christian authors. A Jewish science of Judaism was then only in its initial stages, and Jost's "History of the Israelites" (*Geschichte der Israeliten*), which had just begun to appear, was still far distant from the times which interested Heine.

"A wealth of instruction and pain" came to him from the treasures of the university library in Göttingen, old, often all but illegible tomes, frequently anti-Jewish in tenor. With pen in hand, carefully scrutinizing page after page and book after book, he delved into the fascinating material, ready to jot down whatever might be important for the great cultural canvas that he had

in mind. He gathered data as for a scientific treatise, indefatigable in his attention to detail. Among papers left by him, a lucky chance has preserved a few pages of preliminary studies for the *Rabbi* in Heine's own handwriting: selected quotations, notes, excerpts. They show, with palpable clarity, how little Heine really knew of Jewish things and Judaism when he wrote the *Rabbi*—that only a minute fraction of the Jewish customs and conditions which he so fondly described was known to him from personal observation, and that, except for the abundantly sought and gladly given written and oral guidance of well-versed friends like Zunz and Moser, he largely had to depend on the comprehensive works of older, Christian scholars, for instance the rector of the University of Frankfort, Johann Jakob Schudt, with his several volumes of "Jewish Curiosities" (*Jüdische Merckwürdigkeiten*) (1714-1717).

Heine worked with the painstaking thoroughness of a miniaturist on his picture of the city of Frankfort on the Main in the late Middle Ages. From manifold sources he culled the most significant details and combined them into a gorgeously colored mosaic. Some, like the song which the Flagellants chanted while slaughtering the Jews, were contributed by the famous Limburg Chronicle. The origin of others may be traced from another piece of paper left by the poet that contains terse quotations from Lersner's "Chronicle of the Far-famed Free Imperial, Electoral, and Commercial City of Frankfort on the Main" (*Chronica der weitberühmten freien Reichs-, Wahl- und Handelsstadt Frankfurt am Main*), in two huge volumes (1706-1734), and from Anton Kirchner's "History of the City of Frankfort on the Main" (*Geschichte der Stadt Frankfurt am Main*) (1807-1810). Eventually the greater part of Heine's notes from these two works went into a single page of the *Rabbi*.

Then, seeking to penetrate farther into Jewish history, Heine took up Basnage's *Histoire des juifs depuis Jésus-Christ jusqu'à*

*présent*. He knew it already, but now the study of its second, enlarged edition, published in 1716 at The Hague in fifteen volumes, stirred violent emotions. His excerpts from this work have also been preserved. They contain many references to the medieval accusation of infanticide, and to pogroms caused by it. In one brief sentence copied from Basnage, "Villains [in Spain] throw corpses into Jewish houses at Eastertide," we find the salient theme which in the *Rabbi* provides the exciting impulse for the action. Heine made numerous notes on baptized Jews turning into the worst anti-Semites. The tragic destinies of the medieval Jews in all European countries, traced by Basnage with warm sympathy, stirred his compassion. Then, gradually, those of the Spanish Jews came more and more into his field of view, and finally he came upon the towering personality of Isaac Abravanel.<sup>1</sup> This man, a conscious Jew and a Portuguese statesman at the same time, deeply impressed the young law student who was about to take his LL.D. and dreamed of a happy future in government service. He deplored the scantiness of Basnage's information and asked Zunz for material on the history of the Abarbanel.

Fortunate enough to dig up a Latin biography of Isaac Abarbanel by Johannes Henricus Majus the Younger (Frankfort on the Main, 1711), he industriously digested this work, too. At the top of his excerpts he placed a remark which he crossed out again, but later used in the *Rabbi* anyway: "That he is a descendant of David says Menashe ben Israel." He then wrote down a brief pedigree of the man, followed by a quotation translated here from the Latin:

"He was brought up in his native city and there was called by King Alfonso to the greatest offices at court; thus it happened that he devoted himself entirely to the arts and to the business of the court, as our hero himself has testified in a fragment of Rabbi Gedaliah ibn Yahia's *Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah*. It will be worth-

<sup>1</sup> Heine generally spelled the name "Abarbanel."

while to quote this passage: 'All of these Bible commentaries and books I composed after leaving the soil of my native country. For I was previously occupied at royal courts and had neither leisure to think nor knowledge to write, and I spent my years in vanity and restlessness, to gain wealth and honor, wherefore this wealth has since calamitously perished. But after I became a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth and began to lack money, then only did I explore the Holy Scriptures.' Thus say Abarbanel's prefaces to the Book of Joshua and to the First Book of Kings. . . ." — "where he describes early flowering and subsequent fall," Heine himself added. Beneath this quotation he drew up a table of the most important events in Isaac Abravanel's life, very clearly arranged, always precisely noting the date according to both the Jewish and the Christian calendars, as well as Abravanel's age at the time, with special consideration for the years from 1492 to 1496, his flight from Spain to Naples, his voyages to Sicily, to Corfu, to Monopoli in Apulia, his eventual settlement in Venice (1503), his death, and his burial in Padua.

This sheet of paper from Heine's literary remains reveals how, as the work slowly progressed, he conceived of the idea of bringing his Rabbi Abraham, an invented character representing late-medieval German Jewry, in contact with the leading figure of Sephardic Jewry. Yet even before he got around to bringing together the largely introvert world of ghetto Judaism with the extrovert, highly educated Spanish Judaism and its Spanish-Arab cultural traditions, his interest in the story of the Abravanel's shifted. Another member of the noted family began to fascinate him: Isaac's third son, Samuel. According to Majus, he had studied at the Jewish Academy in Toledo, had been even more learned than his father, and very prominent as an author, but had been baptized in Ferrara. This young Abravanel who became a Christian crossed Heine's path at the very moment when he—"from luxurious frivolity" or from the desire for a government position—

was very much concerned with baptism, the purchase of the "admission ticket to European culture." And so Heine's picture of him turned into that of a historically apocryphal nephew of the great Isaac, whom he also called Don Isaac Abarbanel, but upon whom he transferred a part of the history of Samuel Abravanel, especially his studies at Toledo and his subsequent conversion to Christianity.

The newly added second principal character gave the story an altogether new turn: the vindication of Don Isaac's change of faith. Certainly Don Isaac Abarbanel's apostasy from Judaism was to have been caused by the intimate contact with Italian humanism—which, after all, was more or less indifferent in matters of religion. At this point a new element was added to the conception of the *Rabbi*: the personal experience of the poet. He, too, left Judaism—as did Börne, Rahel, Eduard Gans—not from religious motives but under the influence of modern, early 19th-century European culture on a Jewry straining to break out of the bounds of the ghetto.

Inevitably there occurred a deep, incisive change in the Jewish poet's attitude toward his Jewish work. The originally intended objectivity of a "historical genre picture" gave way to the subjectivity of a picture of his own wavering between ghetto and modern European-Christian civilization. The historical narrative couched in a loving miniature style changed to confessional poetry. Like the genteel Spanish knight, eagerly vowing in mock and earnest to wear Lovely Sarah's colors (the yellow patches!), Heine attributed to his embrace of Christianity "perhaps the meaning that I should devote myself more to the defense of the rights of my unfortunate race." So, when he wrote to Moser two days after his baptism (on June 28th, 1825, in Heiligenstadt) without mentioning the fact, he could in the very same letter ask him for new, specifically Jewish material on the Abarbanel. By intending to place the apostate Jew in the foreground of the story he meant to atone for his own apostasy.



At this point, with the aid of the preserved preliminary studies, an approximate reconstruction of the poet's plan may be possible. It was not in Frankfort that pious Rabbi Abraham of Bacherach was to meet the unhistoric Don Isaac, a member of Spain's famous Abarbanel family who inclined to Christian culture, but in the Italian homeland of humanism—perhaps in Venice, Pisa, Florence, or one of the spas of Lombardy. "For seven years you shall go begging!" Sarah's father called after Abraham when the young man married his daughter by a ruse; beyond a doubt, we have in this curse an indication that the rabbi and his wife were to roam the earth for seven years before they came to rest, and on their wanderings they evidently were to come to Italy. There—in the meeting with the humanistically learned Abarbanel, perhaps also in meetings with the famous humanists of Italy—Heine meant to confront devoutly faithful traditional Judaism with modern, Christian-European culture. And still another symbolic figure seven is important: for seven years Sarah had to wait for Abraham's return from Spain. Certainly Heine did not wish to content himself with the "dark rumor that while Rabbi Abraham had studied the holy Law zealously enough at the Academy of Toledo, he had also copied Christian customs and absorbed ways of free thinking, like the Spanish Jews who at that time had attained to an extraordinary height of culture." His probable plan was rather to strengthen the individual, if not in fact autobiographical, features in the rabbi's figure—at first fairly typically drawn—and in the further course of the story to insert revealing flashbacks to those seven years which Abraham had spent in Spain, also with Don Isaac, but before Isaac's baptism. There, then, the "most heretical notions" would have appeared, "which would have aroused a great hue and cry among both Jews and Christians."

The entire story would thus have encompassed a span of twice seven years. In each of these two periods the rabbi would have had a decisive meeting with Isaac Abarbanel, and in both the

psychological theme would probably have been the same which at the time absorbed Heine: the great struggle between, on the one hand, his clear rationalism which upheld the enjoyment of life and rejected as folly all self-sacrificing ardor, and, on the other, the ecstatic tendency inflamed to the point of self-sacrifice by the "idea." This was by no means the later antithesis of "Greeks" and "Nazarenes," which would one day be expressed in the third chapter of the *Rabbi* and in which Heine's *Weltanschauung* culminated later, when he sided with the "Greeks." At this time, immediately after his baptism, all his inner inclinations drew him—in contrast, as he thought, to Goethe—to the side of the ecstatic "who gives up life itself for the idea," and thus is happier than the wearer of the laurel, the great man who can look back on a very long, "egoistically comfortable" life. However, as Heine had begun as a disciple of Hegel, it may be permitted to take a great further step and assume that finally, in a remote distance, he envisioned a synthesis eliminating the antitheses—perhaps the *Rabbi* was to have ended with a vista of America as the new land of religious freedom. The fact recalled in Heine's letter, that this country was discovered in the year of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, may have had deeper significance for the plan of the novelette.

Thus at the peak of his work on the *Rabbi*, in the summer of 1825, Heine wrestled with the problem of giving artistic form to the great, soul-stirring battle which he and the best of his Jewish contemporaries fought out within themselves while advancing from the rigid, narrow confines of the ghetto into the wide and open spaces of modern Europe. The psychological withdrawal from Judaism which shortly followed on his baptism removed the living basis from the work he had conceived as Jewish. The rather lightly executed conversion to Christianity made it impossible for the serious artist to continue the novelette as an expression of an inner struggle. And so the work, begun with such great hopes,

though always weighing heavily on the author, was left to lie a fragment.

Nearly fifteen years went by from the time that Heine had done any serious work on the *Rabbi*, fifteen years of thorough estrangement from everything Jewish. Then, on the 7th of May, 1840, he had to report for the Augsburg *Allgemeine Zeitung* on the Damascus Affair, that sensational relapse into the Middle Ages wherein once again the ritual murder myth played its gruesome role at Passover time. And now Heine recalled that old, unfinished novelette which had the same accusation on the same Jewish holiday for a leitmotif. On the very next day he announced the *Rabbi* to his publisher as "very topical" for his next book, the fourth part of the "Salon." He got out the old and carefully kept papers and pushed the sheets with the meticulous excerpts from the learned works aside—with those he did not know what to do now. He swiftly corrected the old manuscript and had a secretary prepare a legible copy for the printer. He checked over this copy, too, made all sorts of trifling changes, improved a phrase here, the structure of a sentence there—he could not afford to waste much time and effort on this work. The note at the end of the published fragment, "The conclusion and the succeeding chapters have been lost through no fault of the author's," was a fiction intended merely to excuse the fragmentary nature of the publication.

In the course of this revision Heine made only a single cut, aside from little words of no importance. In describing the Seder evening, he had underscored the impressiveness of this celebration with the remark that "even those Jews who have long forsaken the faith of their fathers and pursued foreign joys and honors are moved to the depths of their hearts when the old, familiar sounds of the Passover happen to strike their ears"—and after that, originally, came this sentence: "Then they feel as though awaking from a drab and hollow dream, and finding themselves buried alive in a lonely sepulchre."

The third chapter, as written out in his own hand in the early summer of 1840, and the copies of the first two chapters as corrected by him, constituted the manuscript used by the printer.

This new third chapter grew out of Heine's feeling that he owed it to his own development to break the mood at the conclusion of the sentimentally started Jewish novelette. Leading up to it is a variety of satirical touches in the description of the Frankfort ghetto types. They do not so much resemble Jews of the late Middle Ages as ghetto Jews of Heine's day—and indeed, for instance, Nosey Stern was a character personally observed in Frankfort by the poet and appearing also in his book "On Börne" (*Über Börne*), written in 1840. It may well be that this strongly critical attitude to Jewish ghetto people was greatly strengthened in the 1840 revision.

In point of style the third chapter of the story contrasts considerably with the beginning. Full of wit and irony, its every line stresses the contrast between Greek sensual joy and mortifying Nazarenism. The emphasis finds the poet, quite unlike 1825, siding openly with the Greeks. Here the Heine of Paris, not yet gravely ill but sensually joyous, reveling in all the comforts of life, expressed his *Weltanschauung*. He still might be able to be aroused to fight for the "idea," but never again for the Jewish idea. It is not to pray but to eat that Don Isaac Abarbanel visits Jew Street; just like Monsieur Henri Heine, he loves its cuisine far better than he loves its faith, and "tasty" childhood memories are all that now and then attract him to his former coreligionists. At the same time, the same satirical mood lets Heine say in the book "On Börne": "It is the *tscholnt*<sup>1</sup> alone that unites them still in their old covenant," and lets him credit Börne with having said "that the renegades who deserted to the new covenant need only smell a *tscholnt* to feel a certain homesickness for the synagogue."

There is no denying Heine's mastery of language, his equal

<sup>1</sup> *Tsholnt*, Sabbath dish.

command of lyrically tender, sentimentally soft, spiritually grave, mockingly gay, satirically cruel tones. The deep impression of the Bible is shown by the symbolic choice of the names Abraham and Sarah, as by the symbolism of the figure seven. Typical for Heine is the composition. Single pictures are threaded together; in form, had the novel been finished, it would have reminded the reader even more of the "Travel Pictures" (*Reisebilder*). Some secondary characters are also typical for Heine and likewise recall the "Travel Pictures": the drummer and the fool, neither without a deeper symbolic meaning. And yet the whole leaves a discordant impression. It is due not only to the break in the style and the changing attitude toward Judaism, which strikes the most ingenuous reader, but even more so to the disturbing irresponsibility with which the rabbi, in the hour of peril, secretly leaves the congregation entrusted to him, to save his own life and that of his helpmeet.

It was only about the year 1846, when he grew somewhat less lordly than Hegel had taught him to be, that Heine inwardly reapproached Judaism and read J. M. Jost's "History of the Israelites" with the greatest sympathy: "If I could be sure of living for ten more years," he said, "I, too, should write Jewish stories." The "Hebrew Melodies" (*Hebräische Melodien*) of the *Romanzero* of 1851 are the deeply felt memories of this returning affection for Jewish things. Independently but simultaneously, a religious feeling awakened in the mortally sick man. His "enlightenment" was due "quite simply to the reading of a book . . . and the title of this book is just 'the Book,' the Bible."















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